

ONE-MAN



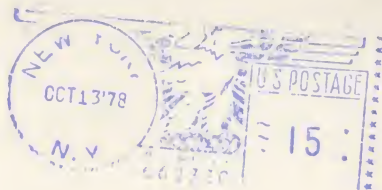
PAUL SARKISIAN

UNTITLED, acrylic on
linen, 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 1978

PAUL SARKISIAN

October 21-November 22, 1978

NANCY HOFFMAN GALLERY
429 West Broadway
New York 10012/966-6676



PL
MR KENNETH DONOHUE-DIR
LOS ANGELES CO MUSEUM OF
5905 WILSHIRE BLVD
LOS ANGELES CA 90036



PAUL SARKISIAN

October 9 - November 10, 1982

NANCY HOFFMAN GALLERY

429 West Broadway

New York 10012/966-6676



MR. MAURICE TUCHMAN Curator
Los Angeles Co. Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036

LIBRARY

JAN 21 1983

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
MUSEUM OF ART**

Paul Sarkisian/Untitled #2

Acrylic on Linen, 89" × 102½", 1982



PAUL SARKISIAN

UNTITLED #4, acrylic on canvas, 79" x 119", 1980

ONE-MAN

SARKISIAN, P.

PAUL SARKISIAN
October 11 - November 6, 1980

NANCY HOFFMAN GALLERY
429 West Broadway
New York 10012/966-6676



PL
MR MAURICE TUCHMAN-CUR
LOS ANGELES CO MUSEUM OF
5905 WILSHIRE BLVD-ART
LOS ANGELES CA 90036



PAUL SARKISIAN

Untitled Watercolor

1974 23 x 29

Michael Walls Gallery

LIBRARY

AUG 24 1984

YONKERS COUNTY
LIBRARY

sarkisian



aug. 6 - sept. 2

reception

8 - 10 p.m. aug. 6

JACK CARR
GALLERY

1128 fair oaks
south pasadena

LIBRARY

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



Paul Sarkisian
Untitled #6, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 103" x 79 1/8"

PAUL SARKISIAN

Recent Paintings
March 31 — April 25, 1981

Fendrick Gallery

3059 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20007
(202) 338-4544

LIBRARY

MAR 27 1981

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
MUSEUM OF ART

**You are cordially invited
to attend a reception
OCTOBER 23, Friday from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.
to open two exhibitions:**

PAUL SARKISIAN PAINTINGS

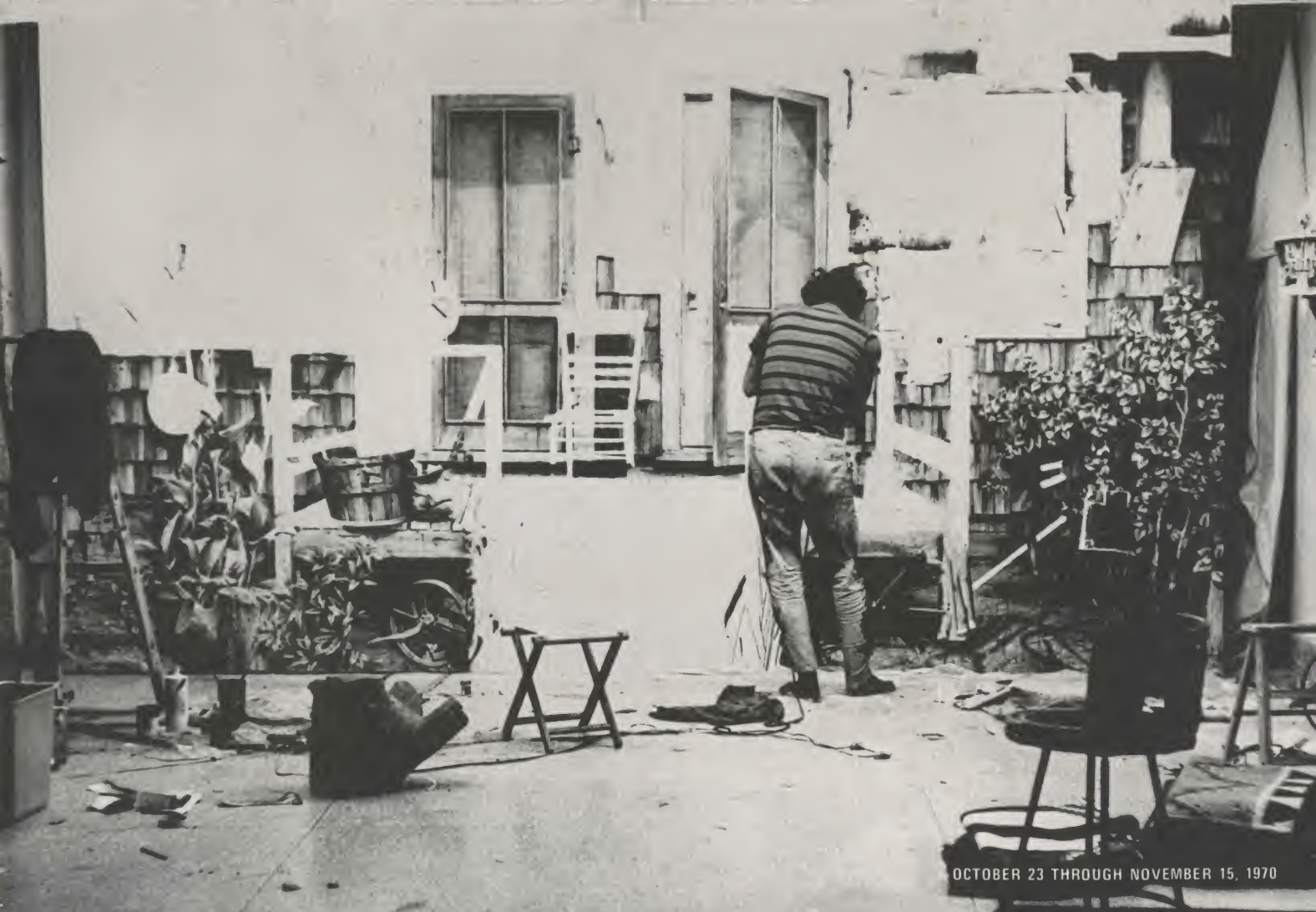
Huge, incredibly skillful, surrealistic paintings combining
nudes, nostalgic pop elements, photographs, blue skies
and old houses (McCormick Gallery)

RECENT CONTEMPORARY ACQUISITIONS

Recent additions to the museum's collection:
works by David Park, Harold Paris, Manzu, Peter Voulkos,
Walasse Ting, Dennis Burton and others
(Von Romberg Gallery)

Mr. Sarkisian and donors of the contemporary
acquisitions will be honored guests.

Music by *The City Lights*
No-host bar



OCTOBER 23 THROUGH NOVEMBER 15, 1970

PAUL SARKISIAN PAINTINGS AT THE SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF ART



PAUL SARKISIAN / LITHOGRAPHS

OPENING SATURDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER, 11 TO 6

THROUGH 18 OCTOBER 1972 AT

MICHAEL WALLS GALLERY

8406 MELROSE AVENUE

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90069 / (213) 655-0355

LIBRARY
LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

SEP 29 1972

ARTIST'S FILE

Paul
Sarkisian

Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, Illinois

February 5 to March 19, 1972





One of the most obvious inferences from Paul Sarkisian's recent "house paintings," and to some extent from his earlier work as well, is that they represent a reaction against abstraction. Most good realist painting in the 20th century, and probably all of it since 1960, can be so characterized. Any period in which a lot of abstract art is produced, in which the picture plane is forcefully affirmed and volumetric and naturalistic reference denied, seems inevitably to awaken a hunger for mimetic painting, and mimesis is something we never altogether outgrow a feeling for. There is always fascination in good and convincing imitation, whether in painting or birdcalls or counterfeit money.

The impact of the virtuoso realists who have emerged in the last ten years (following the 1950s, that is, which were dominated by abstract art)—Alfred Leslie, Chuck Close, Richard Estes, Malcolm Morley, Sarkisian himself—is to some extent the same impact which, we are told, Zeuxis, Giotto, Caravaggio and Norman Rockwell made on their respective audiences: we are dazzled by the magical illusions they fabricate, and by the proximity of their images to visual reality. And also like those others, the latest realists have found ways of making their realism seem more realistic than any that went before them. The first time I saw Sarkisian's work I marveled at how he managed to paint an image identical with the look of a photo mural, and the photograph is something we presume to be a duplicate of what the eye sees. Marveling, moreover, is a delicious experience and perhaps even a relief, after all the intellectual exertions and forswearing of associations which abstract art often requires of the viewer.

There is, nevertheless, a good deal more to the new realism in general and Sarkisian's in particular than mimesis and a surcease from esthetic difficulty, and this is borne out by the curious double identity of the artist's house paintings. If on the one hand they do provide some of the pleasures of recognition, on the other they have an opposite effect. In duplicating not just the appearance but the scale of actual houses, Sarkisian has said that he hopes the subject may become indistinguishable from the painting of it. That is an illusionistic purpose in the historic mold. At the same time, however, if one steps back from his canvases, and so gains a measure of detachment from them, they appear to be painted with a flatness, a blandness, an "all-overness" suggestive of color field abstraction. Oddly enough, these works have the formal quality of wall tapestries at the same time as they are replicas of the seen world. By isolating one aspect of realism—the magnified photographic look—Sarkisian has recapitulated the paradox Monet demonstrated in his water lily paintings. The narrower and more precise a realism, often the more abstracted and stylized it becomes. (Monet, by the way, was not the first artist of whom this was true; it applies as surely to the 15th century Flemings.)

Sarkisian's earlier work also reveals ambiguities, and is just as surely dependent on a variety of expressive antecedents. Moreover, it too has a single obvious aspect—surrealism—but again, a number of other currents moving within it. The juxtaposition of landscape and machinery and nudes and bizarre costumes, the tantalizing fragmentation of forms, and the overall shocking precision of handling, are reminiscent of *La Femme 100 Têtes* of Max Ernst (while

also recalling Sarkisian's own still earlier interest in small collage). But this is a chromium, late-American surrealism, which has the experience of pop behind it and is charged with some of the ironies of pop. In its brilliantly commercial colors, its large format, its coldly photographic eroticism, it is a kind of billboard parody of surrealism that brings to mind Roy Lichtenstein's sardonically broad caricatures of Mondrian and Picasso.

There is also an air of easy caprice about it—again in the pop mood—that even extends to the secrecy of some of Sarkisian's meanings. A balloonist, for instance, is the artist's culture hero Bob Dylan (with Manhattan reflected in his spectacles). Most of the other figures have similarly specific identities and they are nearly always related to Sarkisian's personal experiences and values. It simply pleases him to work this way. Clearly, no one can understand his iconography without being initiated into it by Sarkisian or his friends, and even then it doesn't affect the quality of his work or its intrinsic meaning in any significant way. But it does underscore the spirit of playfulness and the cheerful, nearly dadaistic willingness to engage in irrelevancies, which are personal reflections of the more public ironies of the pictures.

When one tots up the attributes of these paintings, then, along with all the glittering illusionism one is left with quite an assortment of other expressive elements. Sarkisian turns out to be anything but a single-minded artist. Without sacrificing anything in stylistic consistency, he appears to have summed up in this exhibition (which represents nearly the whole body of his work) most of the sensibilities of the third quarter of the century. Franz Schulze

Untitled (Waynesboro) 1969



Untitled (Bus) 1969

Catalogue

*Dimensions are in inches;
height precedes width*

Untitled (Picasso) 1966

*Acrylic on canvas
105 x 109
Lent by Corcoran Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.*

Untitled (Waynesboro, Pa.) 1969

*Acrylic on canvas
115 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 148 $\frac{3}{4}$
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Harry W. Anderson,
Atherton, California*

Untitled (Bus) 1969

*Acrylic on canvas
117 x 136
Lent by Santa Barbara Museum of Art
(Museum purchase with the aid of
Mrs. George R. Fearing and
Mrs. K. W. Tremaine), Santa Barbara*

Untitled (Altoon) 1970

*Acrylic on canvas
117 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 141
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Gene A. Estribou,
San Francisco*

Untitled (Mendocino) 1970

*Acrylic on canvas
114 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 198 $\frac{1}{2}$
Lent by Walter Scott Woods, Jr.,
San Francisco*

Untitled (Santa Barbara) 1970

*Acrylic on canvas
110 x 191
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John H. Slimak,
Chicago*



Paul Sarkisian



LIBRARY

MAY 29 1991

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
MUSEUM OF ART



Untitled #6, 1980

Catalogue of the Exhibition

Untitled #1, 1981

acrylic on linen, 89" x 79"

lent by Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City

Untitled #2, 1980

acrylic on linen, 78" x 112½"

lent by Atlantic Richfield Company, Los Angeles, California

Untitled #3, 1980

acrylic on linen, 79" x 119½"

lent by Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City

Untitled #6, 1980

acrylic on linen, 103" x 79½"

lent by Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City

Untitled #7, 1980

acrylic on linen, 79½" x 103"

lent by Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City

Untitled #8, 1980

acrylic on linen, 88½" x 79½"

lent by Frederick Weisman Company, Los Angeles, California

Untitled #9, 1980

acrylic on linen, 42" x 42"

lent by Jeff and Carrie Franklin, New York City

Untitled #8, 1978

acrylic on linen, 72" x 72"

lent by the artist

Untitled #11, 1978

acrylic on linen, 72" x 72"

lent by the artist

Untitled #14, 1978

acrylic on linen, 72" x 72"

lent by the artist



photograph by W. B. Foote

Paul Sarkisian

Born in Chicago, Illinois, 1928; School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, 1945-48; Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, California, 1953-54; Mexico City College, Mexico, 1955-56; presently lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

One-Man Exhibitions

Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City, 1980.
Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, 1980; traveling to Herron Gallery, Indianapolis, Indiana; Ohio State University, Columbus, 1980.
The Arts Club of Chicago, Illinois, 1979.
Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City, 1978.
Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas, 1977.
Featured Painting, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas, 1975.
Michael Walls Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 1973.
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois, 1970.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California, 1970.
Michael Walls Gallery, San Francisco, California, 1970.
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1969.
Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1968.
La Jolla Art Center, California, 1963.
Aura Gallery, Pasadena, California, 1962.
Nova Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts, 1958.

Group Exhibitions

Real, Really Real and Super Real, San Antonio Museum Association, San Antonio, Texas, 1981.
A Decade of Drawing in Black and White, 1970-80, Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1980-81.
Art for Collectors, Flint Institute of Art, Flint, Michigan, 1980-81.
Contemporary Art from New Mexico, A Scottish Arts Council Exhibition, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1980.
Realism/Photo Realism, Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1980.
Possibilities for Collectors III, Des Moines Art Center, Iowa, 1980.
Contemporary Naturalism: Works of the 70's, Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, Roslyn, New York, 1980.
Words and Numbers, Summit Art Center, Summit, New Jersey, 1980.
American Art Since 1950, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California, 1980.
Group Show, The Center for the Visual Arts Gallery, Illinois State University, Normal, 1980.
Summer Group Show, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City, 1980.
100 Artists, 100 Years, The Alumni of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, 1979-80.
First Western States Biennial Exhibition, organized by the Western Collection of Fine Arts; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; Seattle Art Museum, Washington; University of Hawaii, Honolulu; Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California, 1979-80.
Reality of Illusion, The Denver Art Museum, Colorado, traveling to: Honolulu Academy of Art, Hawaii; Oakland Museum, California; University Art Museum, University of Texas, Austin; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1979-80.
Prospectus: The Seventies, Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut, 1979.
Group Show, Middendorf-Lane Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1979.
Recent Acquisitions, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, 1979.
SoHo Directions, Brookhaven National Labs, Upton, New York, 1979.
Still Life, Lamont Gallery, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, New Hampshire, 1979.
Paintings from New York Galleries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, traveling to: James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia; Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia, 1979.
Group Show, University of North Dakota Art Galleries, Grand Forks, 1979.
Things Seen: The Concept of Realism in 20th Century Art, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1979.
Armory of the Arts Show, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1979.
Realists, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1978.
Drawing the Line, Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, 1978.
Watercolors, Thomas Segal Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts, 1978.
Illusions of Reality, Australia Council, traveling to: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and National Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, 1977-78.
Group Show, Young-Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, 1977.
Painting in the Age of Photography, Kunsthau, Zurich, Switzerland, 1977.
Major New Works, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City, 1977.

New Realism, Jacksonville Art Museum, Florida, 1977.

Painting and Sculpture in California, The Modern Era, National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., 1977.

A View of the Decade, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois, 1977.

Aspects of Realism, traveling exhibition throughout Canada, sponsored by the Rothmans of Pall Mall, 1977.

The First Time I Saw Ferus, 1957-66, Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California, 1976.

Visions, Distinguished Alumni, 1945 to Present, Chicago Art Institute, Illinois, 1976.

Fall Invitational, Roswell Museum, New Mexico, 1976.

Painting and Sculpture in California, The Modern Era, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California, 1976.

Possibilities, Des Moines Art Center, Iowa, 1976.

Painting and Sculpture Today, 1976, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1976.

12 Contemporary Artists Working in New Mexico, Museum of New Mexico, Fine Arts Center, Santa Fe, 1976.

Drawings, Monique Knowlton Gallery, New York City, 1976.

Peter Ludwig Collection, Aachen Museum, West Germany, 1975.

34th Corcoran Biennial, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1975.

Peter Ludwig Collection, Contemporary Art Museum, Zurich, Switzerland, 1974.

Watercolor Show, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York City, 1974.

71st American Exhibition, Chicago Art Institute, Illinois, 1974.

American Painting, EXPO '74, Spokane, Washington, 1974.

Separate Realities, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Barnsdall Park, Los Angeles, California, 1973.

Surrealism is Alive and Well in the West, Baxter Art Gallery, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California, 1972.

Traveling Show of American Paintings and Prints, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1971.

Excellence: Art from the University Community, University Art Gallery, University of California at Berkeley, 1970.

Looking West, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, 1970.

Whitney Annual, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City, 1969.

Late Fifties at the Ferus, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, 1968.

Art '65, East to West, American Pavilion, New York World's Fair, Flushing Meadows, New York, 1965.

100 California Artists, Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963.

Annual, Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1960.

Gallery Artists Group Show, Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 1957.

The Merry-Go-Round Show, Santa Monica, California, 1955.

Southern California Painting and Sculpture Annual, Los Angeles County Museum, California, 1954-55.

Walter Hopps' Syndell Studio, Brentwood, California, 1954.

California Painting Annual, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, California, 1952.



Untitled #2, 1980



A not-for-profit gallery funded by Atlantic Richfield Company

Atlantic Richfield Plaza, 505 S. Flower Street, Los Angeles, California 90071



Untitled #9, 1980

Paul Sarkisian

Paintings, June 2—July 11, 1981



You are cordially invited to a preview opening
Monday Night, June 1, 1981 from 8 to 10 pm

A not-for-profit gallery funded by Atlantic Richfield Company
Atlantic Richfield Plaza, Beneath the Twin Towers
Fifth and Flower Streets, Los Angeles 90071

Cover: *Untitled #1, 1981*
cover photograph by Robert C. Reck

North Gallery



HOUSE, (detail) 1981

Ann Preston

HOUSE

Serial Photographs

June 22 – August 15, 1981

ONE-MAN

PAUL SARKISIAN

LIBRARY

AUG 15 1980

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
MUSEUM OF ART

PASADENA ART MUSEUM

PAUL SARKISIAN

Paul Sarkisian is painting highly personal and ambitious figurative works of high quality. At a time when some critics hold that figurative impulses are thoroughly exhausted, this is no mean feat. More so, for he is not simply dealing with figures, but that standard studio subject, the nude, and then, nudes engaged in the academic stronghold of allegory. It is a tribute to the artist that he has successfully resuscitated a totally disregarded mode and has produced an amazing body of work outside the mainstream of recent abstract art. Though he readily admits to the influence of Pop art five years ago (but confirms only a few of its basic tenets), there is little that prepares one for the impact of these paintings.

One must acknowledge his ambitions first in the grand size of his canvases. Wall size or mural scale paintings with figures of nearly life-size proportions poised against broad areas of color provoke at once a public audience relationship which recalls the great Salon "machines" of the nineteenth century. To note the obvious fact that all major American abstract painters have worked in a large-scaled format for the last twenty years is slightly beside the point. For, of the figurative works of the Pop artists few begin to match this size. Also, with few exceptions, this ten to fifteen foot dimension is atypical of works regularly produced in Southern California.

The style is thoroughly immaculate, more than tight or precise, i.e., careful, but rather pristine in the control of outlines, smoothness of modelling, and sureness of composition. If it is care, it is attention devoted to the justness of relationships. Nothing is extraneous because severe editing permits nothing superfluous to enter upon the surface. Built part to part, through constant readjustment, the final composition is right and sure.

The basis of his art is in reality, filtered several steps from its source. Drawn first from his imagination, this imagery passes through the camera and the halftone screen, through his compositional necessities, through a projector and a bare pencil outline, and then it is rendered in a complex system of taping

and spraying. Enormous numbers of changes take place as his style is actually stylization. Three levels of implication are involved: the part played by each section in the composition, the illusory surface of the object represented, and the reference back to the original source material.

The clarity of shape edge is never disturbed for he places his cut out figures and accessories against the foil of a brilliant blue sky. The radiance of this hue's strength aggressively holds the rear plane of space so close to the surface that it pushes the figures to the forefront. The space is only deep enough to accommodate the illusion of the volumes, for the cropping off of the objects at the bottom of the picture creates only a narrow pocket of space. Should the photo reference seem too strong, the illusionism is subverted and the paintings then squeeze out as flat as a two-dimensional reproduction.

Every portion of the composition is under extreme tension. Whether background, ground, or figure, each shape is necessary to the construction of the field. This all-over sense of positive forces and the positive condition of the flat, supposedly negative spaces is entirely within the bounds of a twentieth-century attitude toward the picture plane as a flat surface. Even his ground planes rise with dramatic suddenness and his numerous overlapped shapes are razor-thin, sandwiched layerings. Here the experience of Sarkisian's early monochromatic textural works, his progress through an Abstract Expressionist style, and his collages of half-a-dozen years ago all count heavily toward a respect for maintaining a close, pressured two-dimensional feeling.

Perhaps the most unusual and strikingly eerie quality stems from the use of arbitrary color and the predominance of value contrasts. Color "stains" distinguish objects but emphasize the disparateness of the parts and reenforce the sense that the material relates to rotogravures or old chromolithographs. Those areas depicted in a color and black seem to be "actual" because of the immediate and tonally graphic character of the chiaroscuro, while the nudes

as well seem "realistic" because of their flesh-colored verisimilitude. On the other hand both are equally distant; the stained value areas are processed and removed as in a tinted filtering of time, and the nudes are idealized and tempt us to guard our voyeurist tendencies.

It should be noted that the artist is not attempting to achieve the look of a photograph in the paintings, but uses them in his collage studies as preserved reality not easily observed. He chooses this method over drawing from the live model because hand skills would introduce the element of "artistry" over a magical re-creation.

Each composition is the occasion for the establishment of tension points, some smooth and transitional, others abrupt and heavily detailed, all providing a maximum opportunity for the painting of beautiful passages. Not paint as pigment or impasto—the tactile quality of beautifully handled brushwork—but rather emphasized is the relative anonymity of the gradated tones of the airbrush. By themselves the tones would possess aesthetic potentials in a formal sense, but are always accompanied by the additional reverberations of thoughtfully controlled and thoroughly felt subject references. Sarkisian possesses an enormous gift of rightness of pacing the parts, not only in a broader compositional sense, but also in treating the individual figure. Relatively free from complications, the surfaces of the subtly shaded nudes are given to generous areas of controlled volumetric modulations creating a palpable form of taut flesh. Shapes and areas are organized over articulation of surfaces and joints except in such detailed parts as hands, heads, and hair. In these places, depending on the general clarity of focus, enormous amounts of complex information are conveyed with a simplicity of means.

In the best sense of the term, he is a painter of "purple patches", a term used in literature and art criticism to point out passages rendering evocative material in such detailed and potent execution that they imprint themselves directly on the mind and imagination. Instances have been cited in Manner-

ism, Pre-Raphaelite painting, and Surrealism, and certainly this artist shares with these styles a preference for the enigmatic and forced relationships on the level of fantasy. Purple patches then are seen to be in this case the re-creation of experiences beyond realism, transcending to a dream-like state. Not merely involved in a provocative pose or gesture, his intensity extends to a superb attention to focus in the distribution of hard contours and soft interiors and more exactly to the treatment of detailed textures. Rocky surfaces, wicker baskets and chairs, ropes, creases in heavy clothing, and complex metallic objects abound and are delineated with an obsessive sense of completeness. In such areas the quality of the purple patch is found, and they further mark the differences between the bareness of the bodies, the hard skies, and fleecy clouds. With no hand marks visible, one's comprehension is suspended and these surfaces appear quite incredible.

His encounters take place at the edge of the world, a strip of terrain is provided to lift the figures upward to an extent of space. The earliest paintings of the series are equally arbitrary in floating the figures from proverbial skyhooks rationalized by Nadar's observation balloon. Though grounded in the viewer's space, his forms are buoyant and aerial, active and self-possessed. The separation between the nudes and the draped figures in color and value terms has been noted, but it is also of interest that the drapery is always more than a covering. It assumes the nature of a heavily molded swaddling wrapper. Hats, gloves, and viewing devices mask and protect even more of the draped figures and we come to realize these are artistic creators (Dylan, Picasso, and Hefferton) observing us or the models. The paintings become commentaries on the studio situation of the three-way relationship between the artist, the model, and the viewer. They also point up the unencumbered freedom and sensuousness of the idyllic model as opposed to the muffled and constrained point of view of the artists. In one of the most recent paintings the artist has been replaced by a nude male suggesting a creator is now outside the work and replaced by

an alter-ego.

In their iconography Sarkisian's paintings embody a complex sort of personal Romanticism.

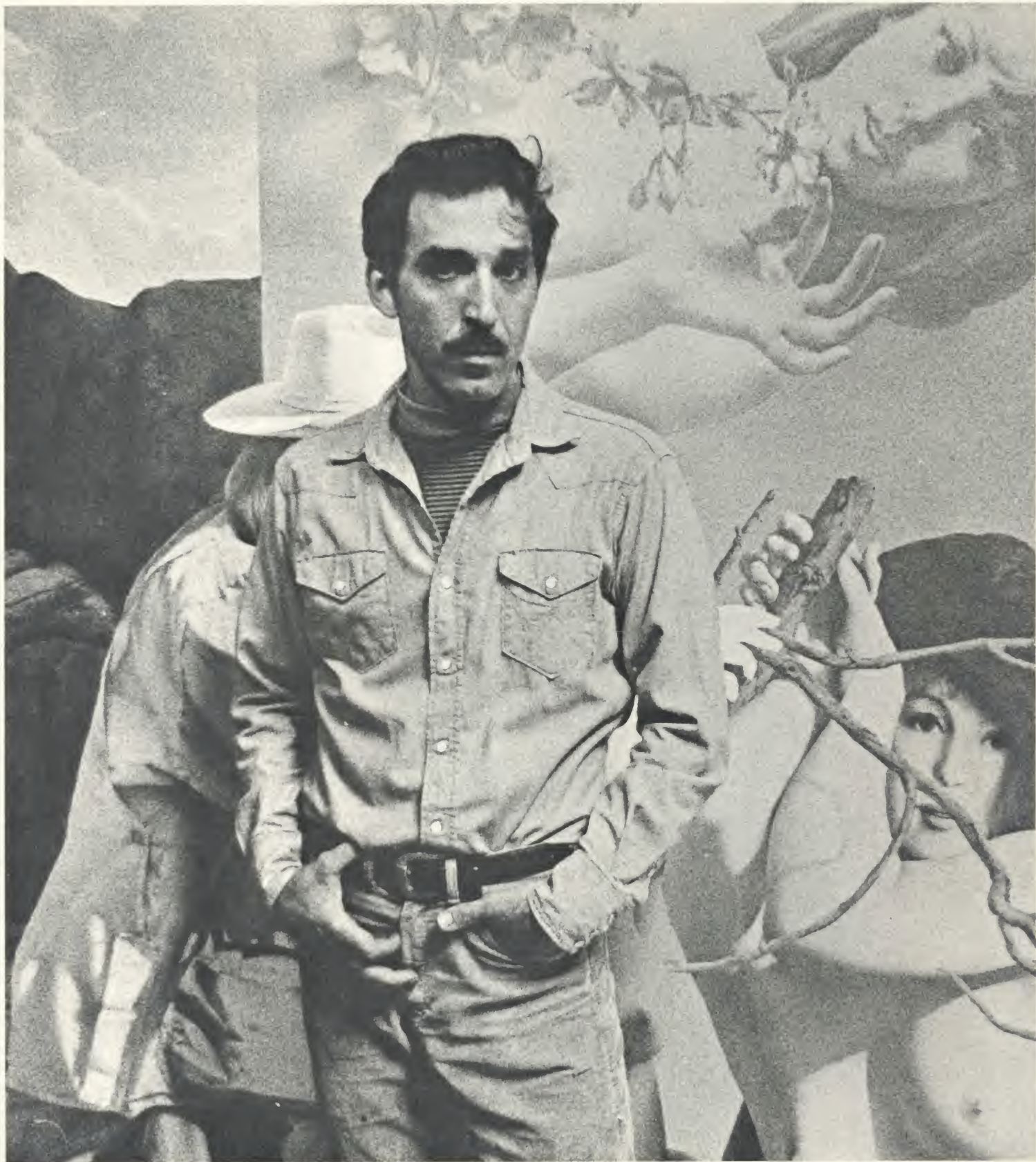
Fidel Danieli



PAUL SARKISIAN Born Chicago, Illinois, 1928. Lives Altadena, California

Works are measured in inches, height preceding width.

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| 1. UNTITLED 1966
Acrylic on canvas
105 x 109 | 2. UNTITLED 1966-67
Acrylic on canvas
136½ x 104 | 3. UNTITLED 1967-68
Acrylic on canvas
129 x 116 | 4. UNTITLED 1968
Acrylic on canvas
116½ x 132 |
|--|--|---|---|

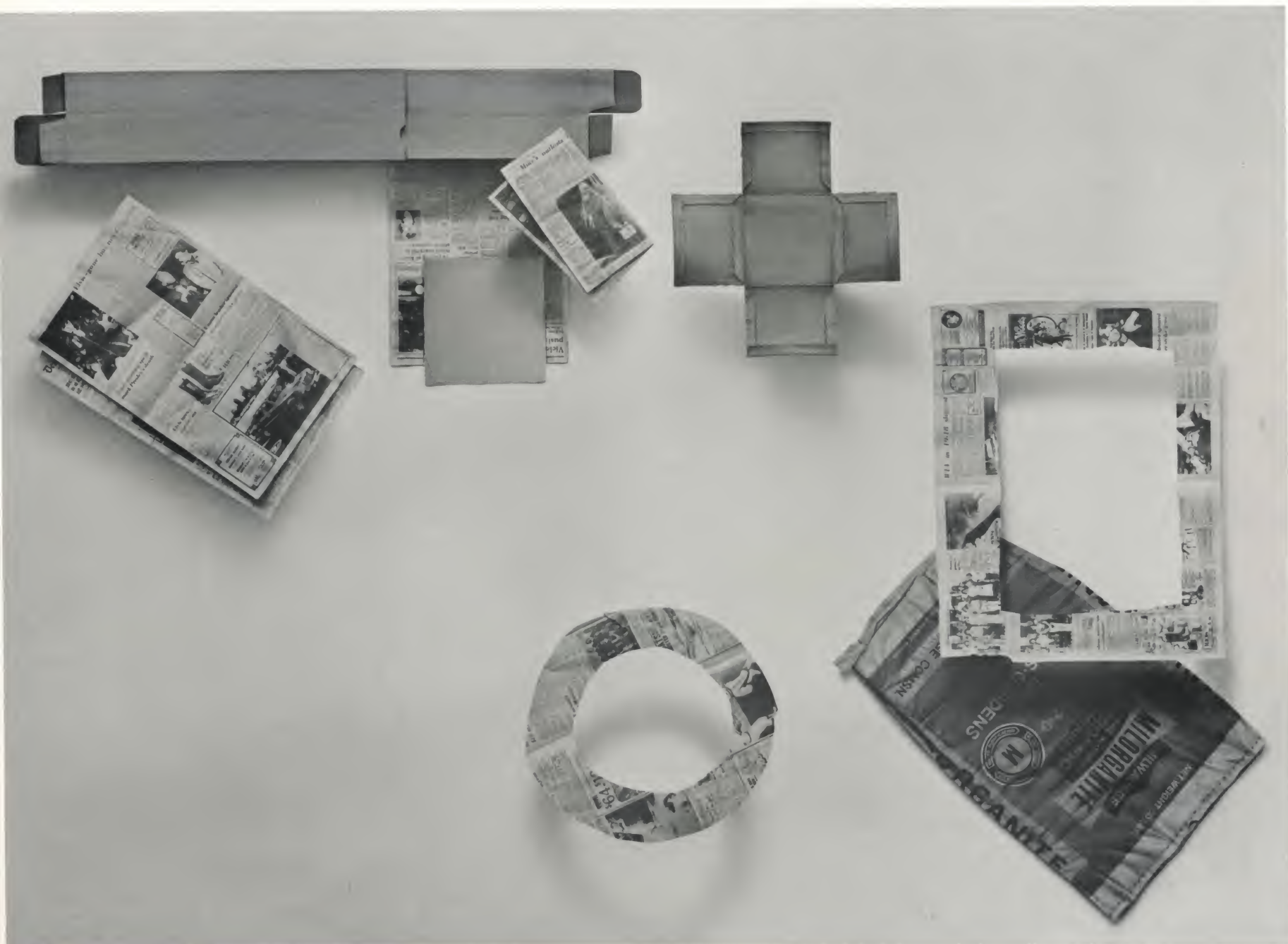




ONE-MAN
PAUL SARKISIAN
PAINTINGS

LIBRARY
JUN 15 1979
LOS ANGELES COUNTY
ARTS CENTER

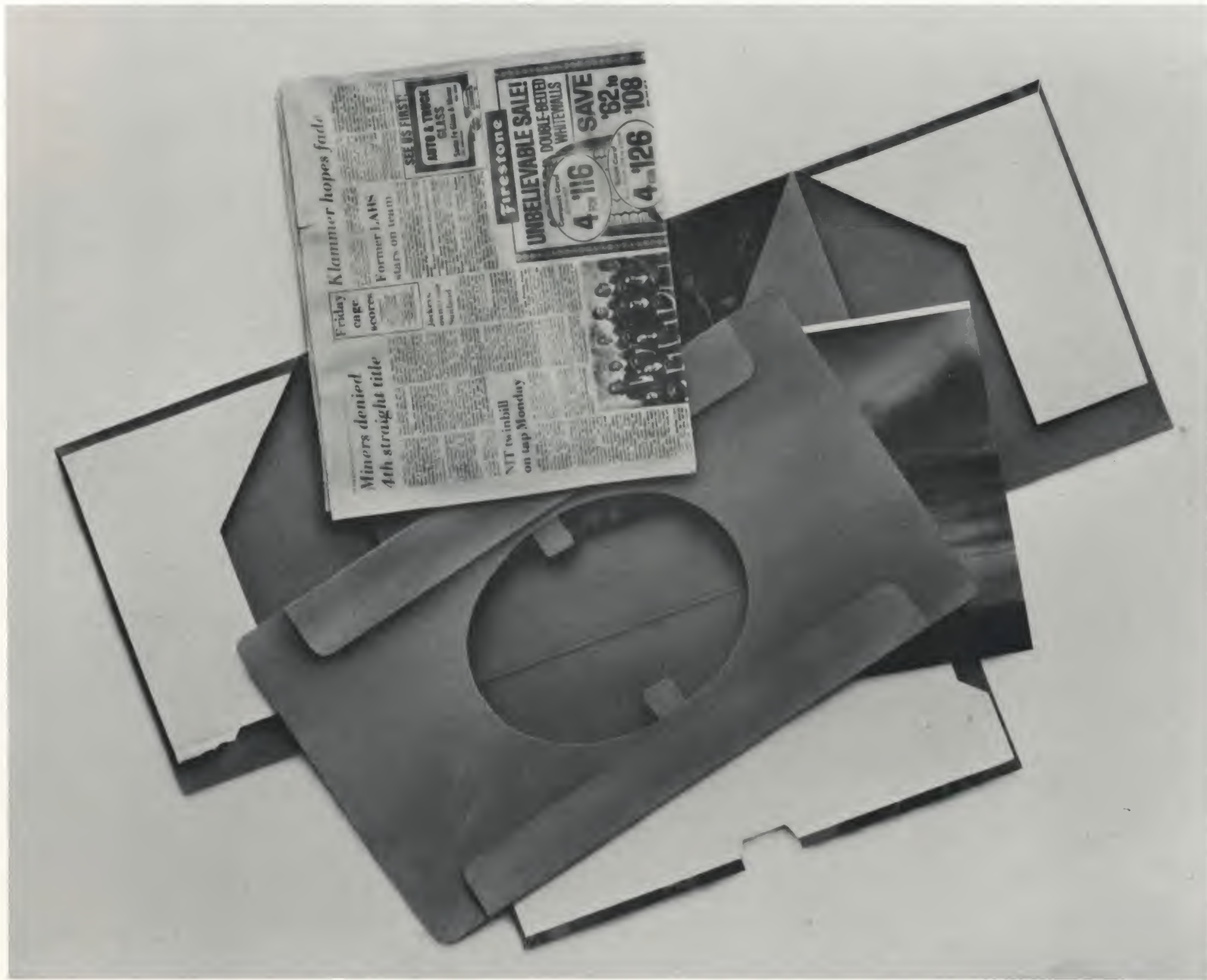
MAY 22 THROUGH JUNE 25, 1979
THE ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO













PAUL SARKISIAN was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1928, and presently lives in Cerrillos, New Mexico. He attended The School of The Art Institute of Chicago, 1945-48; Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, 1953-54; and Mexico City College, 1955-56. He has taught at the Pasadena Art Museum; University of Southern California, Los Angeles; University of California, Berkeley; University of Oregon, Eugene; and University of Southern Florida.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Aachen Museum, West Germany
The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois
Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Des Moines Art Center, Iowa
Fine Arts Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana
Minneapolis Museum of Art, Minnesota
Museum of University of Georgia, Athens
The Oakland Museum of Art, California
Pasadena Art Museum, California
Roswell Museum of Art, New Mexico
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California

ONE MAN EXHIBITIONS

Museum of Contemporary Arts, Houston, 1977
Museum of Contemporary Arts, Houston;
Featured Painting, 1975
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1972
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1970
Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969
Pasadena Art Museum, 1968
La Jolla Art Center, 1963

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln; *Realists*, 1978
Montclair Art Museum; *Drawing the Line*, 1978
Australia Council, traveling to Australian National Gallery, Canberra; Western Australian National Gallery, Perth; *Illusions of Reality*, 1977-78
Kunsthhaus, Zurich; *Painting in the Age of Photography*, 1977
Jacksonville Art Museum; *New Realism*, 1977
National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institute; *The Modern Era*, 1977
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago;
A View of the Decade, 1977
Rothmans of Pall Mall, Sponsor; Alan Hanlon, Curator; *Aspects of Realism*, traveled through Canada, 1976-78
The Art Institute of Chicago; *Visions, Distinguished Alumni, 1945 to Present*, 1976
Roswell Museum; *Fall Invitational*, 1976

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; *Painting and Sculpture in California, The Modern Era*, 1976
Des Moines Art Center; *Possibilities*, 1976
Indianapolis Museum of Art;
Painting and Sculpture Today, 1976
New Mexico Art Museum; *12 Contemporary Artists Working in New Mexico*, 1976
Aachen Museum, West Germany, 1975
Corcoran Gallery of Art, *34th Biennial*, 1975
Contemporary Art Museum, Zurich, 1974
National Gallery of Australia, 1974
The Art Institute of Chicago;
71st American Exhibition, 1974
EXPO '74, Spokane; *American Painting*, 1974
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery;
Separate Realities, 1973
University Art Gallery, Berkeley, 1970
Joslyn Museum, Omaha; *Looking West*, 1970
Whitney Museum of American Art; *Annual*, 1969
Los Angeles County Museum of Art;
Late Fifties at the Ferus, 1968
New York World's Fair, American Express Pavillion;
Art '65 East to West, 1965
Pasadena Art Museum; *100 California Artists*, 1963
Pasadena Art Museum; *Annual*, 1960-62
Los Angeles County Museum, 1954-55
DeYoung Museum, San Francisco, 1952



Sarkisian edits and "purifies" the subject matter of the feed bags, boxes, and shelving paper, to the point that verisimilitude is inconsequential. To be sure, my initial reaction to the painting was to their appearance of "reality", but the more I looked at the painted objects, the less interested in them I became. I was seeing something more, something abstract, something that my eye wanted me to see.

From an essay by V. B. Price

Except where indicated, the paintings are
lent by Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York

CATALOG OF THE EXHIBITION

- 1 UNTITLED, 1977
acrylic and graphite on canvas
46½ x 46½ inches
Lent by The Art Institute of Chicago
Alsdorf Foundation Restricted Gift
- 2 UNTITLED, 1977
acrylic and graphite on canvas
46½ x 46½ inches
- 3 UNTITLED, 1978
gouache, ink and pencil on paper
22 x 22 inches
Private Collection
- 4 UNTITLED #1 1978
acrylic on linen
72 x 72 inches
- 5 UNTITLED #2, 1978
acrylic on linen
72 x 72 inches
- 6 UNTITLED #7, 1978
acrylic on linen
72 x 72 inches
- 7 UNTITLED #8, 1978
acrylic on linen
72 x 72 inches
- 8 UNTITLED #9, 1978
acrylic on linen
72 x 72 inches
- 9 UNTITLED #11, 1978
acrylic on linen
72 x 72 inches
- 10 UNTITLED #15, 1978
acrylic on linen
72 x 72 inches
- 11 UNTITLED, 1979
acrylic on museum board
40 x 32 inches
- 12 UNTITLED, 1979
acrylic on museum board
32 x 40 inches
- 13 UNTITLED, 1979
acrylic on linen
78 x 108 inches
- 14 UNTITLED, 1979
acrylic on linen
78 x 108 inches

ONE-MAN

SARKISIAN



PAUL SARKISIAN

LIBRARY

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Cover: **Untitled (Santa Barbara)**, photographed unfinished in studio, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 110 x 191
Title Page: **Untitled (Mendocino)**, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 114¼ x 198¼



PAUL SARKISIAN

An exhibition of six paintings

October 23 through November 15, 1970

THE SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF ART

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF ART

1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, California 93104

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Paul Sarkisian's imagery — his pollution-proof blue skies full of nude lovelies, his men in ancient, rumpled uniforms, his red machines — suggests to anyone writing about him to do so in equally surrealist terms. To do so, however, one would have to make up a personal, subjective verbal fantasy paralleling his visual imagery. Otherwise, one can only, as I choose to do, say very little about his imagery at all. As deeply committed to a surreal imagery as Sarkisian is, it is difficult to get him to talk explicitly about what it means to him.

Until his last two works, his imagery, whatever its meaning, has been quite consistent. He likes contemporary artists and musicians, both ones he knows and ones he does not: Picasso, Phil Hefferton, Bob Dylan. He likes complicated old machinery. He likes funny old clothes on his men, and he likes nothing at all on his women. He likes rocks, and clouds. The imponderable confrontations of these things in mid-air can be accounted for in the history of his work by noting how much they resemble his previous work, which consisted of small precious collages combining delicate figures cut from reproductions of paintings, photographs and strange textures alien to them like asphalt roofing. Beyond saying this, there is no apparent or decipherable conscious allegory. The imagery simply emerges in the process of Sarkisian's concern about other things.

When Sarkisian talks about the nature of illusion and reality, however, there is a rapid increase in the verbal traffic. He speaks in a personal and creative way about the painterly illusion, the photograph, the reality depicted. The fact that there is something quite extraordinary about the level of illusion in his work comes not only from the work itself, and from his talk about it, but, in a very special way from photographs of the work in his studio, such as those of the Santa Barbara painting in process reproduced here. The typical catalogue photograph, such as the five at the end of this catalogue, simply lies about his work. Remove size, remove color, remove the incredible skill, above all remove that intangible quality of illusion, and the photograph resembles the painting no more than an X-ray resembles a portrait. On the other hand, black-and-white photographs of Sarkisian in his studio at work on a painting, surrounded by the ladders and tools of his trade, suggest something else. In these, it is extremely difficult to tell or to feel which is the painted object, which the real. In the world inside these photographs, the painted image and the three dimensional reality become one and the same. The more one sees his work, the more it becomes like a house of mirrors in which painted image, photographic image and "real" image chase each other down the corridors of comprehension.

To try to discuss the roll of photography in Sarkisian's work with him is only to add further facets of mirror-surfaced

impenetrability to those the painting already has. In spite of the fact that he takes dozens and dozens of photographs of his subjects, returning to shoot in different lights, collecting endless shots of various details, in spite of the fact the way in which he paints overwhelmingly suggests that the photograph is being consciously and deliberately quoted as it is in much other recent painting, Sarkisian himself finds it hard to see his work as having any significant relationship to photograph at all. "I am only using the photograph as a tool to produce the image itself. I am not trying to make the painting look like a photograph. I am not trying to reproduce photography," he says very firmly. He further points out that a large photo-mural has a quality of insistent visual flatness about it, which is different from the powerful visual illusion of deep space he can achieve with paint on canvas.

There is another explanation for the fact that his work looks as though it is consciously quoting the look of a photograph. Sarkisian paints with a spray gun. He paints with rapt attention to the microscopic results of his tiny spray needle. To change color requires a complete washing and changing of hoses and paint containers, or it requires a whole battery of different spray guns. The effects Sarkisian is after can be achieved perfectly well in one color. So, he quite understandably paints one color at a time, and the fact that this heightens the resemblance of his work to the photographs is an incidental byproduct.

If Sarkisian does not consciously concern himself with the photograph, he does have his own personal manner of relating to the illusion his work creates. The way he puts it, he seeks to have the painting "disappear." "When I start painting a basket, or a hammer, or a pair of pliers, I paint as long as I still see the painting. When the image is complete and on a parity with me, the painting aspect of it disappears. It is no longer a painting; it is now reality in itself. The painting is completed in the disappearance of the painting."

His last two paintings have been a significant departure from his previous work. In both, he has tried to make the painting "disappear" even more, to take art out and to make the illusion of reality more convincing. Both paintings are of houses, the first an abandoned house on Albion Ridge near Mendocino, where the Sarkisians lived some months. The second is a house in the Mexican *barrio* off Milpas Street here in Santa Barbara. Both house paintings are, as he says, "life size," or nearly so, to increase the amount of "reality" in the work and to reduce the amount of "art." These ten by fifteen foot canvases suddenly exist in a world of theater flats, painted in the same scale as the actors who walk in front of them. It is this "life size" aspect which makes a photograph of the painting in his studio on the cover of this catalogue so confounding to our sense of certainty.

In his campaign to further reduce art, he has eliminated different colors and has worked only in black on a colored ground. He has further stopped making illogical, surrealist compositions in favor of having everything in the picture appear to be plausible. A candid, snap-shot view of old chairs and bicycles, worn shoes and screen doors, replaces the floating nudes and old uniforms. This plausibility, however, it is important to note, is very much a created illusion. At every step, Sarkisian is tinkering with reality. He changes the actual objects in front of the house around. He adds a skull or two from among his own favored objects; he copies a handy flower pot or pair of shoes which happens to be at hand; he conjures up a convincing illusion of a photograph of some complicated object entirely out of his head. The “plausibility” of his latest two paintings is as much a created illusion as the implausibility of his previous surrealist imagery.

Sarkisian says “I am now painting with my eye.” Certainly much of the expressiveness of the last two paintings comes from a long process of visual search and selection. Sarkisian probed every section of old wooden houses in Santa Barbara, got thrown out of real estate developments, made enemies, made friends, returned time and time again to seek out the qualities he wanted. The Santa Barbara house intrigued him for the curious symmetry of its pair of duplex doors. He and the owner soon got to know each other well. He showed Sarkisian his roosters, suggested putting his work shoes on the porch in the painting and in other ways shared the creation of the image with Sarkisian, who says of him, “he’s beautiful.”

“The houses I like,” Sarkisian says, “are the houses that give me the feeling that they breathe with life, that people really live there. There’s more of a presence to the painting if the viewer feels that there is someone else involved with that house, that painting. There is a special life that humans communicate to others through what they do with the places and things they live with.”

If Sarkisian now “paints with his eye,” and if his work has particular and very unusual appeals to the viewer’s eye, it is not for the lack of a subtle and remarkable sense of humanity as well.

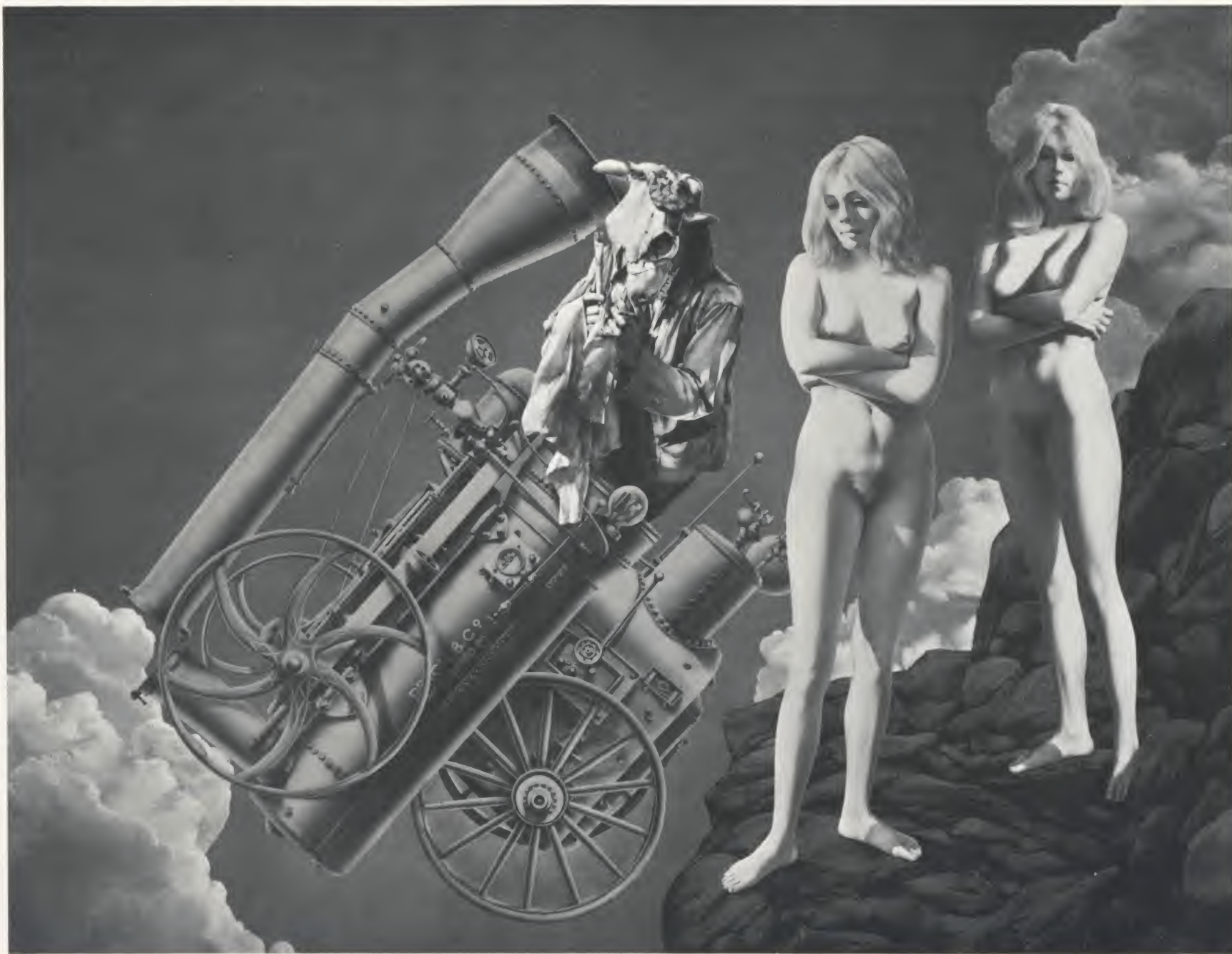
Paul C. Mills
Director

left: **Untitled (Dylan)**
1966-67
Acrylic on canvas
136 x 104

right: **Untitled (Hefferton)**
1967-68
Acrylic on canvas
129 x 116
Fellows of the Pasadena Art Museum
Acquisition Fund



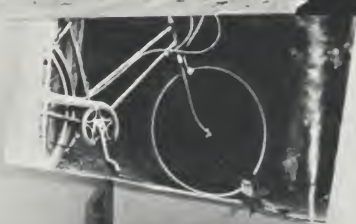
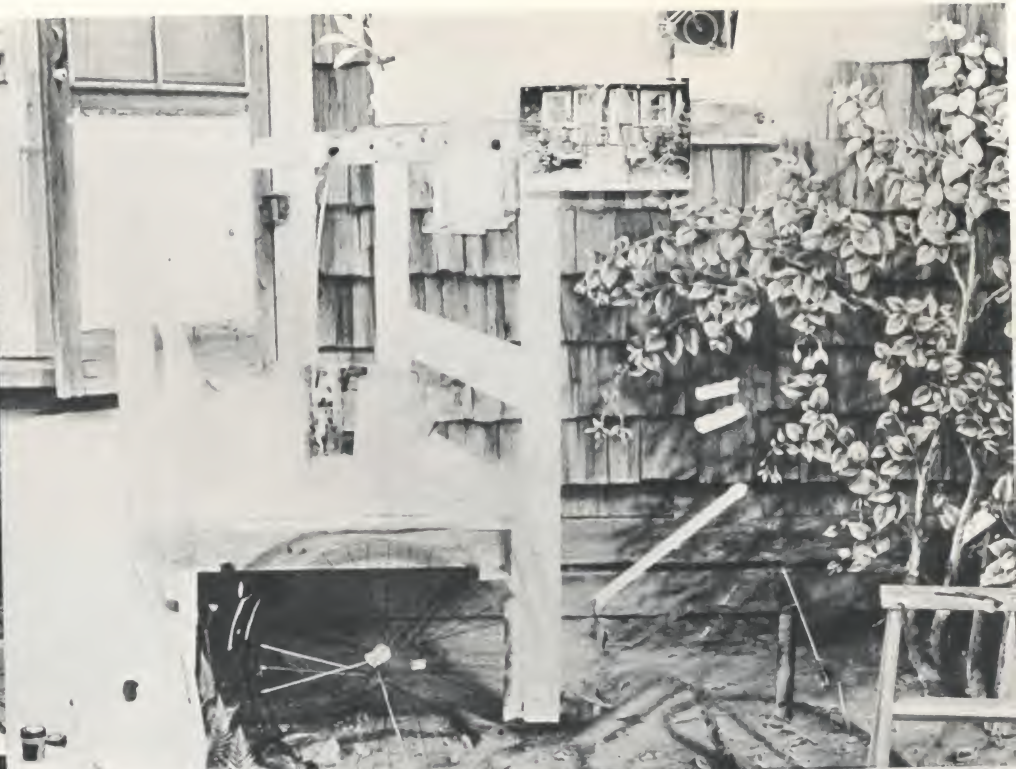


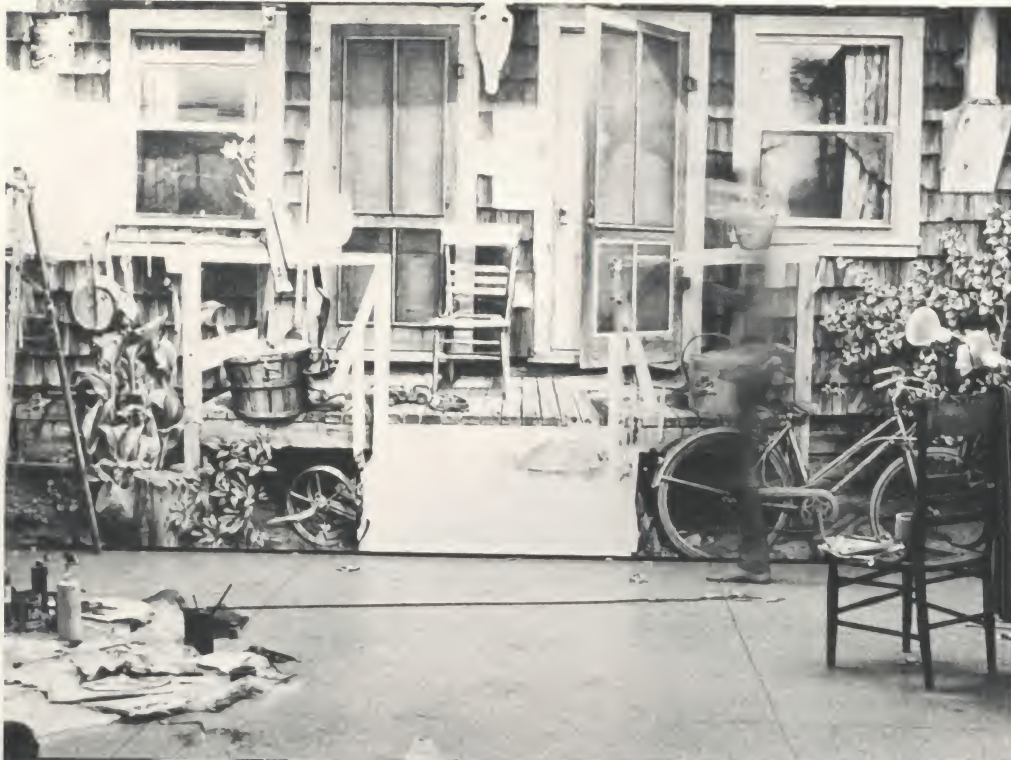


Untitled (Waynesboro, Pa.), 1969, acrylic on canvas, 115¼ x 148¼



Untitled (Bus), 1969, acrylic on canvas, 117 x 136





PAUL SARKISIAN

Birth: Chicago, 1928

Studies: The School of The Art Institute of Chicago, 1945-48
Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, 1953-54
Mexico City College, 1955-56

Teaching includes: Pasadena Art Museum, 1965-69
University of Southern California, Los Angeles; winter quarter, 1969
University of California, Berkeley; winter and spring quarters, 1970

Recent group exhibitions include:

"Late Fifties at the Ferus", Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1968
"1969 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting", Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York, 1969-70
"Looking West 1970", Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, 1970

Recent one-man exhibitions:

Pasadena Art Museum, 1968
The Corcoran Gallery of Art (Dupont Center), Washington, D.C., 1969
Michael Walls Gallery, San Francisco, 1970

Collections include:

Pasadena Art Museum
The Corcoran Gallery of Art

Photographs:

Cover / Stephen Kopels
Title page / Schopplein Studio, San Francisco
Untitled (Dylan) / Frank Thomas
Untitled (Hefferton) / Frank Thomas
Untitled (Waynesboro, Pa.) / Frank Thomas
Untitled (Bus) / Bill Foote
Other photographs / Robert Dean Balogh, Stephen Kopels and the artist

Paul Sarkisian is represented by The Michael Walls Gallery,
Ghiradelli Square, San Francisco

C

ONE-MAN

SARKISIAN

2/5 - 3/19

News Release

PAUL SARKISIAN

This exhibition is one of a pair of one-man exhibitions exploring the unreality inherent in the realistic image represented in the photograph.

Both exhibitions will be held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, February 5 through March 19.

LIBRARY
LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
MAY 5 1972

Paul Sarkisian's finely detailed canvases project onto monumental scale images that suggest still life set in a landscape. In his earlier work photographic replicas of real things meet in a surreal world of illusion. Complicated old machinery, clouds, rocks, men in period costumes and women without, stand, fly and float against a limpid sky. The nostalgic props Sarkisian chooses speak of decay and the past, but this is contradicted by the brilliant color which is characteristic of this work.

Sarkisian paints with photographic exactitude. Yet he finds it hard to see a significant relationship to photography in his work. "I am only using the photograph as a tool to produce the image itself. I am not in the disappearance of the painting."

His most recent monochrome paintings of old, weathered buildings: "Mendocine" (1970) and "Untitled Santa Barbara" (1970) discard color in favor of a tinted monochrome. They also represent a departure from surreal fantasy. Both are paintings of house fronts and are approximately 17 feet wide, or as he puts it, "life-size" so as to increase the amount of reality and reduce art. He looks for houses that are "alive" and then transfers that life onto canvas. "The houses I like are the houses that give me the feeling that they breathe with life, that people live there..." He tinkers with reality, and augments its impact by adding objects, borrowing a flower pot from somewhere else. Paul Mills says of Sarkisian's house paintings, "The plausibility of his latest two paintings is as much a created illusion as the implausibility of his previous surreal work."

CORCORAN --- NEWS

PAUL SARKISIAN'S PAINTINGS TO BE EXHIBITED IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES FOR THE FIRST TIME

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, JANUARY 5

Washington, D.C., December 20, 1968...An exhibition of paintings by PAUL SARKISIAN will open at The Corcoran Gallery-Dupont Center at 1503 21st Street, NW on Wednesday, January 8. Mr. Sarkisian's extraordinary new approach to figurative painting, both visionary and erotic, is embodied in six major paintings completed by the artist in California during the past three years. This is the first time Sarkisian's work will be exhibited in the Eastern United States. There will be a Preview for Members on Tuesday, January 7 from 9:00 to 11:00 P.M.

Born in Chicago in 1928, Paul Sarkisian was awarded a special scholarship to study art at The Chicago Art Institute Museum School at the age of 10! This scholarship was renewed for four years, and Sarkisian continued to show much artistic talent throughout his high school years as well. In 1948, Sarkisian and his family moved to Southern California, where he continued to paint independantly. In 1952, he received First Prize for Figurative Painting at the "13th Annual Society of Western Artists Exhibition" at The De Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco, and in 1953 he pursued his art studies formally at the Otis Art Institute. After attending Mexico City College from 1955 to 1956, he moved to Boston and founded the Nova

- 2 -

Gallery there. In 1959, he returned to California, where he now resides. In 1965, he won a Copley Foundation Grant, and since 1965, he has been teaching at The Pasadena Art Museum Workshop.

Much of Sarkisian's work has caused controversy -- in his 1963 exhibition in La Jolla, California, all of his works were removed from the show because they were considered "blasphemous"; and in 1965, his painting had to be removed from the New York World's Fair American Express Pavillion due to pressure from Reverend Billy Graham.

For further information and photographs, please call The Corcoran Gallery Dupont Center, TEL:293-1700.







**paul sarkisian
four new paintings
may 27-june 27 1970**

ardelli square / san francisco



michael walls gallery / ghirardo